

## Vänfamiljs verksamhet (Friend Family support)

### ORGANIZATION\*

Self /also within Red Cross regional

### COUNTRY AND CITY/IES

Finland, Vasa

### FIELD OF WORK

Volunteering, social integration, social support networking, community mediation

### THE ACTION IS ADDRESSED TO (BENEFICIARIES)

Refugees, but today also other migrants and asylum seekers, undocumented people, etc.

### DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTIVITY

The diversity training by RC volunteers for Finnish families (or representatives from families) who have volunteered to participate is usually held for two evenings lasting three hours. After that it is one or two first meetings between a Friend Family and a migrant family, and either somebody from the municipality's integration services or somebody from the Red Cross (staff or volunteer) are present to ensure the first meeting is okay and that the chemistry works. After that the families are on their own, but follow-ups such as support evenings and debriefings for Friend Families are organised 1-2 times a year for a few years. Sometimes gatherings of all - both Friend Families and Migrant Families - are organised. These follow-ups differ depending on human and monetary resources of the municipalities, the red cross and the voluntary resources.

### MAIN GOALS

The main goal is to improve social integration of new community members' families through the creation of a social support network composed of other families trained in the diversity training. The support network allows a soft welcoming into the Finnish society and understanding Finnish family-life (or single household life). The activity also aims to support language training, to provide concrete support occasionally (for instance maybe help the first times one goes to the store to find correct products), and then the support provided may vary depending on the "Friend Family".

### IMPACTS OF THE ACTIVITY

When local and new community members' families become good friends due to the activity, there is a proliferation of the migrants' opportunities. In terms of language acquisition, this is boosted due to the relation to a Friend Family. The access to networks and participation of new community members can improve access to the job market, access to material resources (bikes, sport tools) and a better understanding about how the Finnish society works. On the other side, support families can develop critical thinking about the asylum system and, in general, people get culturally sensitized.

### COOPERATION WITH STAKEHOLDERS

Red Cross, municipality

### SUSTAINABILITY (ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND INSTITUTIONAL SUSTAINABILITY)

It is a key activity within the Red Cross multicultural activities and the cost is taken partly by the resources of the Multicultural Developer (in time), partly by the local chapters (for training the trainers) and partly by the municipalities for the administration of the course and putting families together with families.

### TRANSFERABILITY

It can be replicated anywhere. Training the Friend Families is important as is the training of the voluntary Diversity Trainers.